

Learn More About Viruses and Worms

What is the difference between a computer virus and a computer worm?

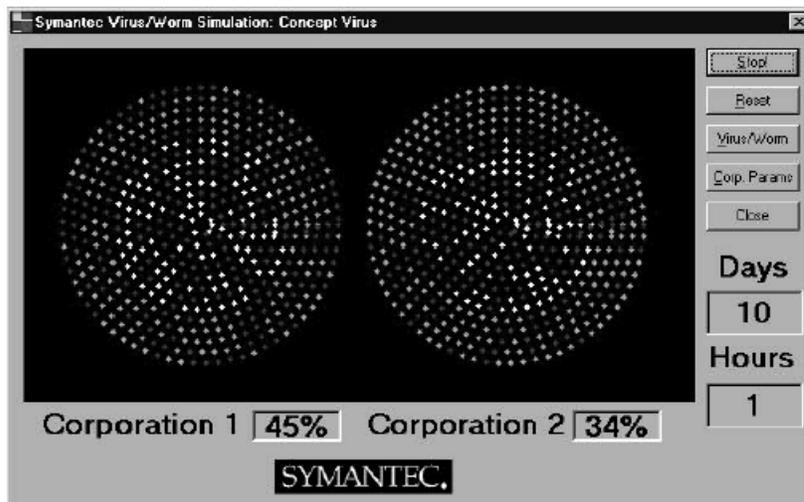
Viruses are computer programs that are designed to spread themselves from one file to another on a single computer. A virus might rapidly infect every application file on an individual computer, or slowly infect the documents on that computer, but it does not intentionally try to spread itself from that computer to other computers. In most cases, that's where humans come in. We send e-mail document attachments, trade programs on diskettes, or copy files to file servers. When the next unsuspecting user receives the infected file or disk, they spread the virus to their computer, and so on. Worms, on the other hand, are insidious because they rely less (or not at all) upon human behavior in order to spread themselves from one computer to others. The *computer worm* is a program that is designed to copy itself from one computer to another over a network (e.g. by using e-mail). The worm spreads itself to many computers over a network, and doesn't wait for a human being to help. This means that computer worms spread much more rapidly than computer viruses.

See for yourself how computer viruses and computer worms spread

Have you ever wondered why the Melissa worm spread so quickly, but other computer viruses spread slowly or not at all? Symantec AntiVirus Research Center (SARC) has created **VBSim**, a tool to help our customers understand how viruses and worms spread. This program was first demonstrated at the Virus Bulletin 1999 conference in Vancouver, Canada.

How does this program work?

The **VBSim** program is a computer simulation that demonstrates how viruses and worms spread through and between corporations. The simulation graphically shows the difference between computer viruses and computer worms as they spread throughout a simulated corporation. Since this is a simulation, each time the program runs it will produce a different outcome and different infection patterns, and it can help to give you an idea of how companies might be affected by the next Melissa or Love Letter worm.



How to download and install program above

Click [here](#) to download VBSim.

Once you download this file, run *vbsim.exe* to extract the contents of the archive. There are three files in this archive:

- README.TXT - The README file
- VBSIM.EXE - The simulation program
- VBSIM.PDF - Simulation documentation

In order to run this program, click on the **VBSim** icon, or run **VBSim.EXE** from the DOS command prompt.

VBSim.exe allows you to simulate how a virus like Concept (the first computer macro virus) spreads, or a virus like Melissa, with is both a computer virus and a worm, or ExploreZip, prime example of a computer worm.

